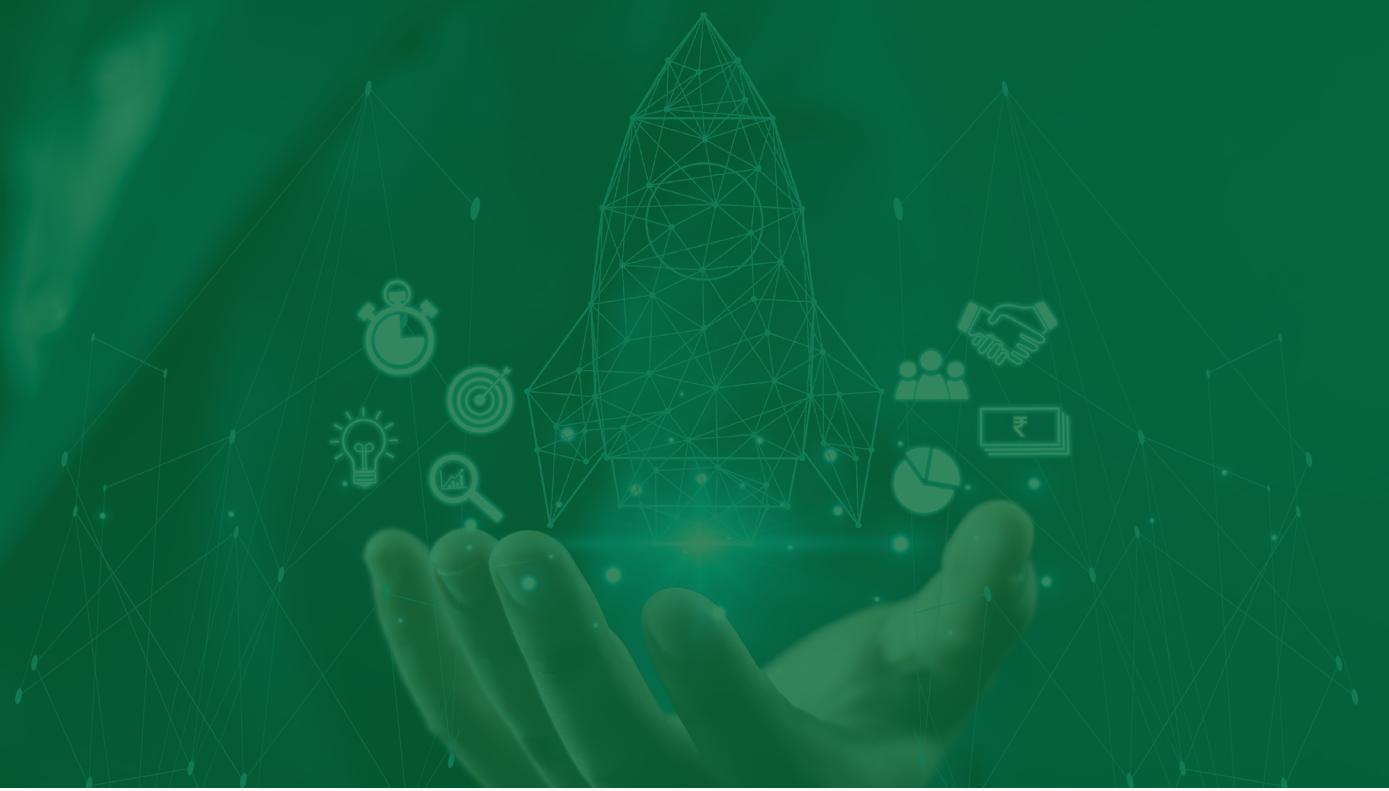


SITAA: Scheme for Innovation and Technology Association with Aadhaar



Table of contents

Abbreviations	3
1. Preamble	4
2. Mission	4
3. Objectives	5
4. Overview	5
5. Enablement partners	6
6. Support mechanisms	8
7. Intellectual Property (IP) framework	15
8. Procurement	18
9. Ecosystem engagement and outreach	19
10. Scheme management and monitoring	20
11. References	20
Annexure I: Eligibility criteria for Funded support	21



Abbreviations

Terms	Definitions
AIP	Accelerator or Incubator Partners
EoI	Expression of Interest
IIC	Institution's Innovation Council
IPR	Intellectual Property Rights
MeitY	Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology, Govt. of India
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
MSME	Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises
MVP	Minimum Viable Product
NISP	National Innovation and Start-up Policy
RBIH	Reserve Bank Innovation Hub
RFP	Request For Proposal
SITAA	Scheme for Innovation and Technology Association with Aadhaar
UIDAI	Unique Identification Authority of India

SITAA: Scheme for Innovation and Technology Association with Aadhaar

1. Preamble

Aadhaar serves as the foundation of India's Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI), positioning the country as a global leader in national digital identity systems. To drive open innovation and develop relevant and scalable use cases in digital identity, India must embrace private participation and foster an ID Tech innovation ecosystem aligning with Atmanirbhar Bharat initiatives.

UIDAI intends to explore new-age technologies and leverage India's thriving startup and research community to pioneer cutting-edge solutions in digital identity. This ecosystem shall bring together key stakeholders, including

startups, academia, and industry players, and equip them with the necessary infrastructure, guidance, and resources to strengthen India's digital identity landscape.

To institutionalize this innovation drive, the **Scheme for Innovation and Technology Association with Aadhaar (SITAA)** is being launched. SITAA will support the Indian tech ecosystem in developing next-generation digital identity solutions. It will act as a catalyst for collaboration, enabling the innovation ecosystem to build scalable, secure, and globally benchmarked solutions in the digital identity domain.

2. Mission



To strengthen India's digital identity ecosystem by fostering innovation and promoting indigenization in identity technologies.



This scheme constitutes a targeted initiative aimed at advancing the frontier of digital identity through the development of secure, scalable digital ID solutions and Aadhaar-enabled use cases across sectors. By supporting

innovation within the digital identity domain, the scheme seeks to catalyze socio-economic empowerment, enhance ease of living, and ensure inclusive and seamless access to public and private services for all citizens.

3. Objectives

The objectives of SITAA are to:



4. Overview

- i. SITAA is a strategic initiative by UIDAI to strengthen India's digital identity ecosystem by fostering innovation, promoting indigenization, and enabling collaborative development in the identity technology domain.
- ii. The scheme is targeted at:
 - Startups working on digital identity technologies
 - Academic institutions conducting research in digital identity
 - Private firms, MSMEs, and technology providers offering mature identity solutions
 - Government and industry partners interested in co-developing or co-funding Aadhaar-related technology
- iii. Through collaboration with startups, academia, industry, and government bodies, SITAA shall support the development, testing, and potential integration of digital identity solutions.
- iv. SITAA's implementation shall be enabled through two key partnership models: strategic partnerships with innovation bodies and government agencies to drive policy alignment and outreach, and thematic partnerships with incubators and domain experts to support targeted solution development and startup acceleration
- v. The scheme offers multiple support mechanisms, i.e., funded, co-created, and non-funded, that are pathways to engage diverse stakeholders in advancing secure, scalable, and inclusive digital identity technologies aligned with national objectives of self-reliance and digital empowerment

5. Enablement partners

For the effective enablement of this scheme, UIDAI shall forge two types of partnerships:

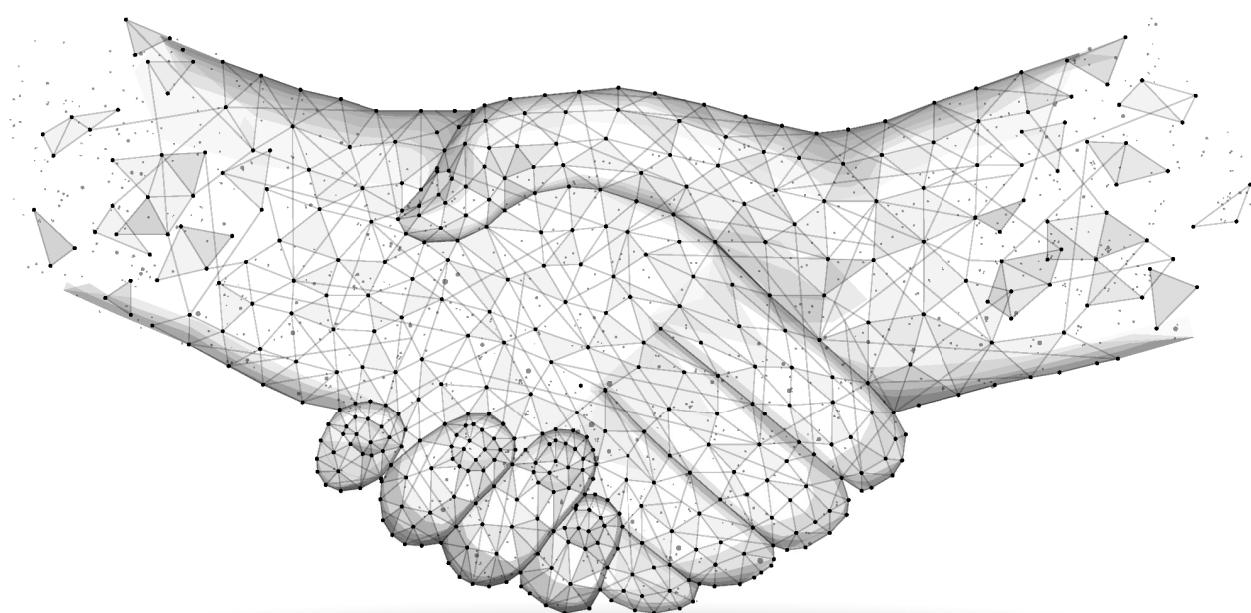
5.1 Strategic Partners

- i. UIDAI shall forge strategic partnerships with key institutions, including industry associations, government agencies, and national innovation platforms, that play a critical role in fostering the growth of startups and academia in the identity technology (ID tech) domain.
- ii. Strategic partnerships shall be formalized through Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs) or equivalent collaboration frameworks with agencies such as MeitY Startup Hub (MSH), India AI Mission, RBIH, MOSIP, NASSCOM, among others. These partners shall work closely with UIDAI to create a domain around ID tech and align startup support initiatives with Aadhaar ecosystem priorities.
- iii. The role of strategic partners under SITAA shall include, but not be limited to, the following:
 - a. Promotion of ID tech innovation across relevant sectors and platforms, leveraging their networks and outreach capabilities.
 - b. Collaboration in designing thematic challenges, hackathons, and national campaigns to source innovative digital identity solutions.
 - c. Identification and support in the management of thematic partners, including Accelerator/Incubator Partners (AIPs), to ensure effective delivery of startup support and cohort management services
 - d. Identification and recommendation of high-potential startups or academic institutions aligned with UIDAI's challenges and thematic focus areas.
 - e. Facilitation of access to national infrastructure and resources, such as testbeds, funding programs, or mentorship networks under their purview.
 - f. Knowledge-sharing and cross-institutional learning, including participation in SITAA events, workshops, and ecosystem showcases, such as UIDAI's annual Samvaad summit.



5.2 Thematic Partners

- i. This scheme shall be implemented with the support of thematic partnerships with selected organizations, institutes, and research entities that can work with UIDAI on specific Digital ID solutions.
- ii. This category of partners shall include selected Accelerator / Incubator Partners (AIPs) that can incubate and accelerate digital identity-based startups and work closely with UIDAI problem statements.
- iii. These AIPs shall be tasked with developing customized acceleration programs to fit the needs of each startup in the cohort and provide services to the selected candidates, which include but are not limited to the following:
 - a. Product-market fit between UIDAI problem statements and the solution being developed
 - b. Mentoring of candidates by industry leaders
 - c. Legal assistance for matters such as IP and incorporation, among others
 - d. Enabling connected learning and networking through a shared platform
 - e. Organizing meetings between the founders of startups
 - f. Supporting demo of product/solution
 - g. Evaluation of the solution and performance of candidates
 - h. Creating a pitch for venture capitalists and angel investors
 - i. Assistance in negotiating investment deals



6. Support mechanisms

- i. SITAA shall enable the creation of support mechanisms between external entities and UIDAI in order to strengthen the research and innovation ecosystem of Aadhaar. Entities that are selected to receive such support are referred to as candidates in this document. Candidates are entities either supported by funds/grants from SITAA, or engaged by UIDAI for testing/trials of innovative solutions, which may eventually lead to procurement.
- ii. Apart from the support available to selected candidates detailed in their specific section in this document, UIDAI may also provide additional support, such as:
 - a. Availability of infrastructure, such as test environment and an anonymized dataset
 - b. Guidance to refine the project to align with the Aadhaar ecosystem requirements
 - c. Workshops with UIDAI's strategic partners to improve upon the solution/prototype
- iii. UIDAI is also open to engaging with professionals from industry and academia on a voluntary basis, with the support of their parent organizations, so that these experts can play a key role in enhancing the Aadhaar ecosystem. However, such volunteers shall be inducted in accordance with the UIDAI Volunteers Guidelines, 2022.
- iv. Support for selected candidates under SITAA is bifurcated further into the following categories:
 - a. Funded support
 - b. Co-creation support
 - c. Non-funded support

Nature of support through SITAA

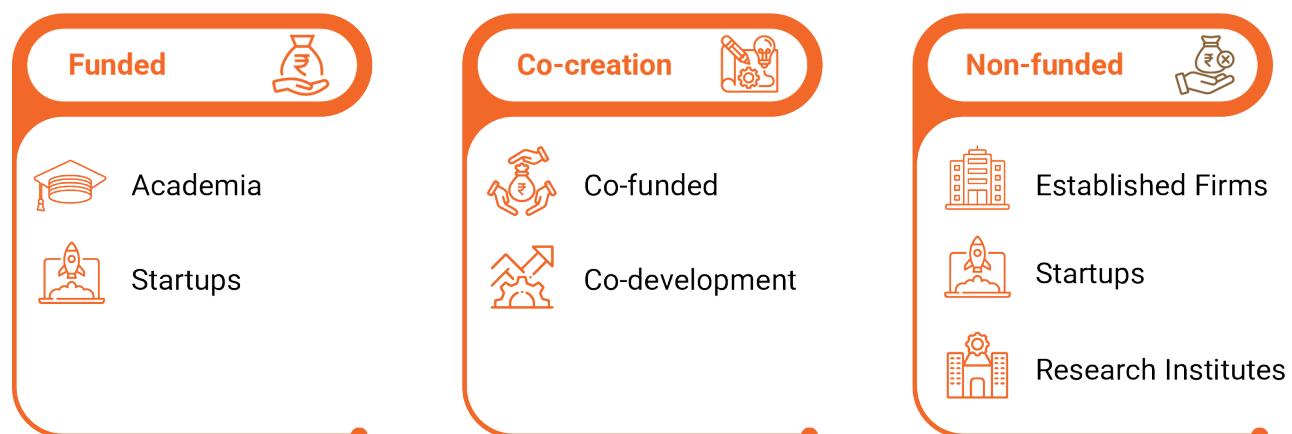


Figure 1: Support through SITAA

6.1 Funded support

Candidates selected to receive funded support under the SITAA scheme shall receive direct financial support in a phased manner from UIDAI for the development of solutions, addressing the challenges

and thematic areas identified by UIDAI. Two types of candidates, viz., startups and academia, shall be eligible to receive such support under SITAA.

6.1.1 Startups

- i. Startups refer to the candidates that fulfil the eligibility criteria of Startups as given in Annexure I of this document, and get selected for incubation support under SITAA.
- ii. Indicative journey of a startup through SITAA:

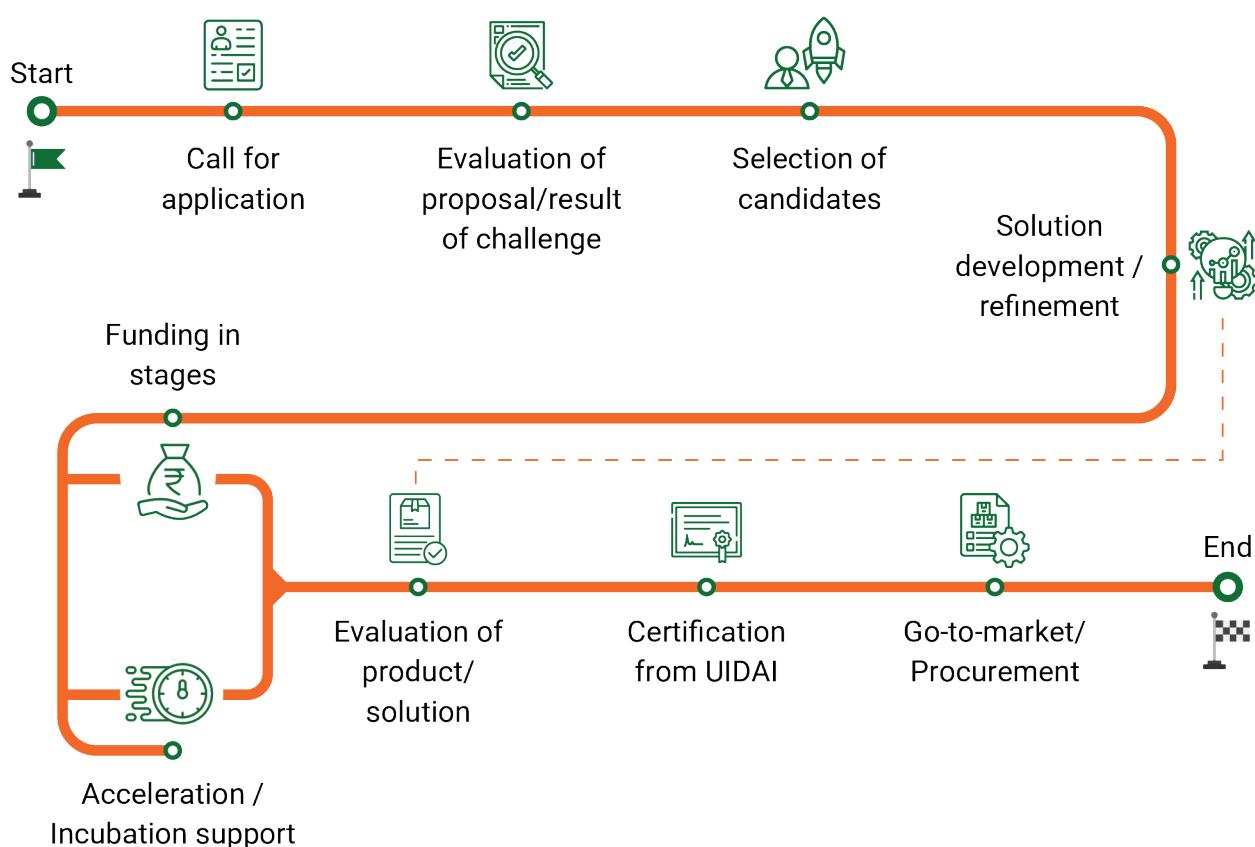


Figure 2: Indicative journey - Startups

- a. UIDAI shall announce a theme or challenge for the selection of each startup cohort. UIDAI, through its partners, may also leverage mechanisms such as hackathons, grand challenges, proposals, among others, to invite applications.
- b. Based on the evaluation of the proposal or the outcomes of posted challenges, UIDAI shall select candidates that qualify to get onboarded onto SITAA.
- c. Funding shall be granted to the startups in stages. The startups shall be asked to demonstrate the efficacy of their developed product/solution in incremental stages in order to qualify for funding for the next stage. All such funding shall also be subject to an expense audit by UIDAI or its nominated agency. If a startup fails to qualify for the next stage, its participation in the program and further grants shall be truncated.
- d. UIDAI may mandate a matching contribution from startups selected under SITAA as a condition for receiving milestone-based grant support. The requirement for such a contribution shall be specified in the invitation to proposal for each SITAA challenge or cohort.
- e. Startups shall also receive incubation and acceleration support from UIDAI's Accelerator/Incubation Partners (AIPs) to develop and refine their product/solution and business idea during the course of this program.
- f. All selected startups shall receive certificates from UIDAI, which shall mention details of the participation in the given challenge, and the stage till which their solution was evaluated in SITAA.
- g. Startups shall be encouraged to commercialize their developed products or solutions by taking them to the open market.
- h. The final product or solution may also be evaluated by UIDAI for potential procurement. Subject to successful validation and conformity with UIDAI's requirements, such solutions may be considered for formal procurement in accordance with applicable policies and procedures.



6.1.2 Academia

- Academia refers to the candidates that fulfil the eligibility criteria of Academia as given in Annexure I of this document, and get selected for grants under SITAA.
- Indicative journey of an academia through SITAA:

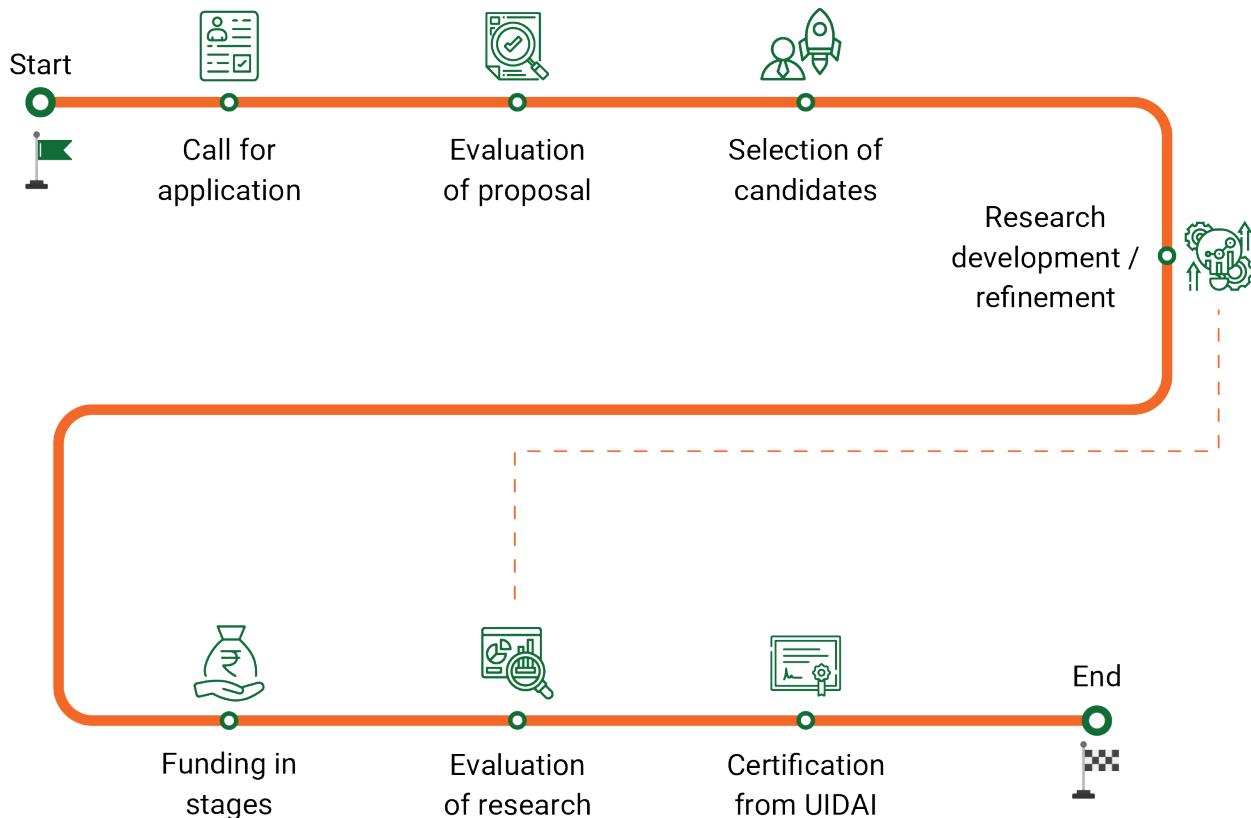


Figure 3: Indicative journey – Academia

- UIDAI shall announce areas of interest for research work, for which UIDAI shall invite proposals from academia.
- UIDAI, with the assistance of its partners, shall scrutinize and evaluate the respective proposals and select candidates to receive further support through SITAA.
- UIDAI shall periodically steer and review the technical and financial progress of the project, recommend release of grants, continuity/extension/short closure, etc.
- Grants may be awarded to such candidates in progressive stages, subject to periodic evaluation of the project's progress and based on the decision of UIDAI.
- All selected academia shall receive certificates from UIDAI, which shall mention details of the participation in the given research, and the stage till which their research was evaluated in SITAA.

6.2 Co-creation support

Co-creation support shall be available to candidates engaged under SITAA through a co-development or co-funding arrangement between UIDAI and one or more established entities (government, public sector, or private). These entities may be engaged under either:

- a. Co-funding - Be selected as development partners jointly funded by UIDAI and other stakeholders to build specified identity-related products or solutions, or
- b. Co-development - Collaborate with UIDAI as joint development partners, pooling financial and technical resources

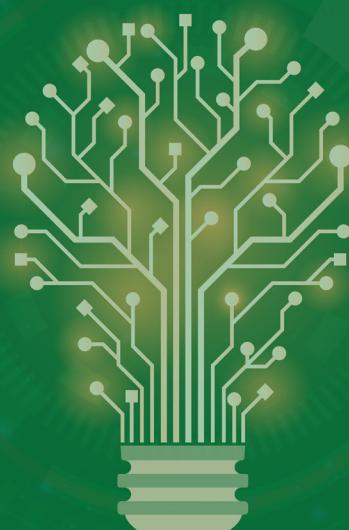
6.2.1 Co-funding

- i. This is a collaborative funding mechanism where UIDAI and one or more entities jointly provide financial resources to a third-party development partner to build a solution of mutual interest. The partner executes the development while funders provide oversight.
- ii. Phases in co-funding through SITAA:
 - a. UIDAI may invite or approach established organizations (e.g., industry consortia, international development partners, or domain experts) to enter into a co-funding agreement, outlining objectives, financial commitment, governance mechanisms, and IP arrangement.

- b. Based on jointly defined goals, UIDAI and the co-funding entity may issue a joint call for proposal through an Expression of Interest (EOI) for the selection of a development partner. The selected development partner shall be onboarded under a tripartite or multi-party agreement.
- c. The development work shall be broken into well-defined phases or milestones, with associated fund disbursal and deliverables. Each phase shall involve a joint technical review by UIDAI and the co-funding partner to determine continuation or recalibration. Failure to meet performance criteria may lead to termination of further support in line with mutually agreed terms.
- d. UIDAI, along with the co-funding partner(s), shall constitute a joint oversight group to review progress, resolve implementation issues, and ensure strategic alignment with the Aadhaar ecosystem. Technical test environment access, anonymized datasets, and alignment workshops with UIDAI may be provided during development.

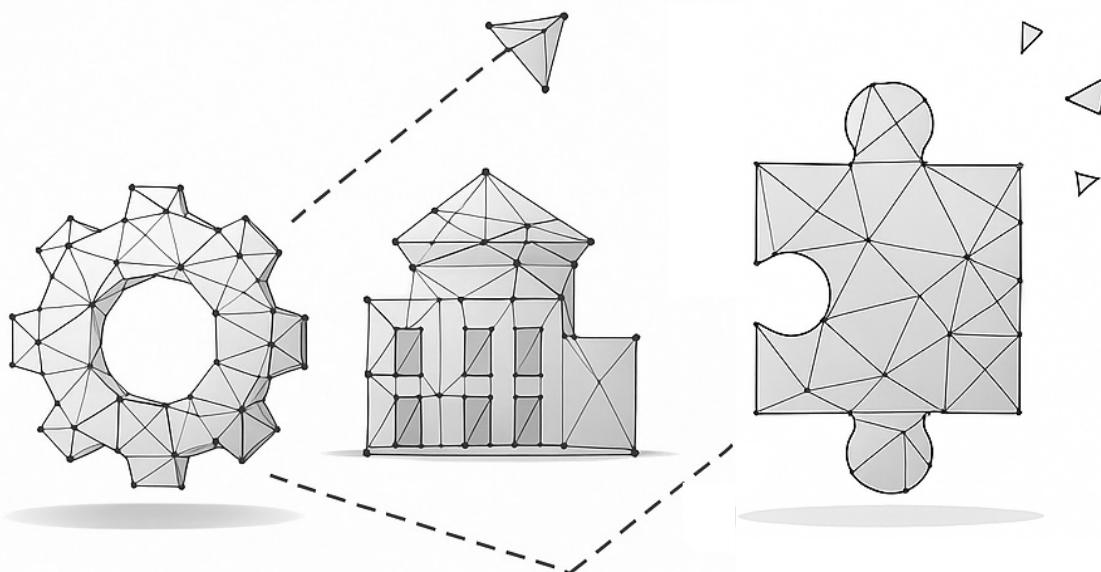
6.2.2 Co-development

- i. An entity selected for co-development shall jointly develop a product or solution in collaboration with UIDAI, where both parties contribute resources—financial, technical, or infrastructural—and share responsibilities and outcomes. This arrangement shall typically focus on strategic or high-impact technology solutions that directly enhance the Aadhaar ecosystem.
- ii. Phases in co-development through SITAA:
 - a. Selection of co-development entity - UIDAI shall invite proposals or directly approach potential co-development partners (e.g., public sector units, R&D organizations, technology companies, or consortia).
 - b. The selection may be carried out via either:
 - EOI process
 - Strategic nomination
 - Mutual agreement with a government agency/mission partner
 - c. Once selected, a formal Joint Development Agreement (JDA) is signed between UIDAI and the entity (and co-funding partners, if applicable), outlining roles, responsibilities, IP framework, and governance structure, including the contribution of resources and/or funds from the signing parties.
 - d. For project planning and work allocation, a joint committee shall be constituted to finalize project scope and deliverables, define milestone-based development stages, allocate resource responsibilities, and set review mechanisms.
 - e. Post development and testing, a pilot may be required to be conducted to check the efficacy of the developed solution. An assessment shall be conducted to evaluate the achievement of objectives and readiness for integration into the Aadhaar ecosystem.



6.3 Non-funded support

- i. Non-funded entities refer to external organizations, such as private firms, MSMEs, research institutions, and technology providers, including startups, that are not incubated or financially supported under SITAA, but are interested in offering Aadhaar-aligned products or solutions. UIDAI may engage such entities for trial, validation, and potential procurement, based on the merit of their offerings.
- ii. Phases in non-funded support through SITAA
 - a. UIDAI may publish an EoI to invite applications from entities offering mature solutions aligned with Aadhaar use cases or technology requirements.
 - b. Interested entities shall submit proposals, including product overview and technical documentation, demonstration capability, and relevance to UIDAI's published challenges or ecosystem needs. UIDAI shall conduct a screening of submitted solutions to select candidate/s for further trial.
 - c. Selected entities shall be invited to participate in a pilot or trial phase within UIDAI's test environment under the No Cost No Commitment (NCNC) principle. Under this arrangement, both parties (UIDAI and the selected candidate) shall bear their own part of the cost incurred for the trial, and UIDAI shall not be obligated to procure the solution post-trial.
 - d. Upon completion of the pilot, UIDAI may conduct technical, functional, and integration readiness assessments. A successful pilot may lead to procurement by UIDAI in line with applicable procurement guidelines.



7. Intellectual Property (IP) framework

For technologies (solution/product/research) developed through support received from SITAA, the following IP management framework shall be applicable:

7.1 IP guidelines for funded support

IP guideline for Startups:

- a. Candidates shall retain ownership of their IP while UIDAI reserves the right to procure the developed technologies.
- b. The candidates shall retain the right to commercialize the solution developed under SITAA and may offer it in the open market, including international markets, subject to compliance with applicable laws, export control regulations, and any confidentiality or licensing terms mutually agreed upon with UIDAI. Such commercialization shall not compromise UIDAI's rights, national security interests, or obligations under the Aadhaar Act and associated guidelines.
- c. In case UIDAI itself plans to procure such developed tech, UIDAI may either:
 - Negotiate terms to utilize the developed intellectual property (IP) in Aadhaar-related applications at the very outset (before the initial round of funding), or
 - Use procurement methodologies such as EoI (Expression of Interest), RFP (Request for Proposal) or any other suitable procurement method on a case-by-case basis.
- d. In case of a candidate's acquisition or closure, UIDAI shall retain the procured rights to ensure continued public access to critical Aadhaar-integrated solutions.

ii. IP guideline for Academia:

- a. Subject to the terms of funding, the ownership of any intellectual property (IP), including patents, generated from funded research shall reside with the academic institution or the inventor(s), in accordance with applicable Indian laws. But the researcher or IP holder shall seek and obtain explicit written permission from UIDAI before filing any intellectual property rights, including patent applications, related to the funded work.
- b. However, as a condition of receiving public funding through UIDAI, the IP holder shall not assert any rights that restrict access, impose discriminatory licensing conditions, or inhibit the commercialization or downstream use of the IP by UIDAI.

- c. UIDAI shall retain the right to determine, whether the IP shall be made available under an open-source license approved by UIDAI, ensuring free, irrevocable, non-exclusive, and royalty-free use by third parties; or retained as exclusive IP for use by UIDAI or its authorized agencies, with restrictions on external use, distribution, or commercialization.
- d. Researchers or IP holders shall not publish, commercialize, or transfer the IP, whether in part or in full, without obtaining explicit approval from UIDAI.

This includes but is not limited to:

- Publication of research papers or articles related to the funded work
- Use of the IP for personal, academic, or institutional benefit
- Licensing or commercialization of the IP with third parties

7.2 IP guidelines for co-creation support

- a. All intellectual property developed under a co-creation engagement may be jointly owned by UIDAI and the partner entity, and shall be governed by the Joint Development Agreement (JDA) or Co-funding agreement, whichever is applicable.
- b. The extent and nature of joint ownership, including rights to use, license, commercialize, or to further develop, shall be delineated in the applicable agreement.
- c. UIDAI may also secure further rights over the jointly developed IP, such as the right to sublicense to government or public sector entities for Aadhaar ecosystem development, at UIDAI's discretion.
- d. The partner entity may be permitted to commercialize the jointly developed IP outside the Aadhaar domain, subject to the terms of the joint agreement.
- e. Any licensing of the co-created IP to third parties, especially for applications beyond UIDAI's domain, shall require mutual consent of both co-owners.
- f. Upon termination of the co-funding arrangement, UIDAI's rights to the IP (including usage rights and licenses) shall survive termination.

7.3 IP guidelines for non-funded support

- a. All pre-existing intellectual property (i.e., IP developed independently by the external entity prior to engagement with UIDAI) shall remain the exclusive property of the entity.
- b. As a condition of participation in the NCNC pilot or trial phase, the participating entity shall grant UIDAI a non-exclusive, royalty-free, limited-term license to:
 - Use the product/solution in UIDAI's test environment
 - Evaluate the functionality, performance, and compatibility with UIDAI systems
 - Conduct internal assessments and trials, including testing with simulated or masked data
- c. This evaluation license shall be non-transferable and restricted to the duration of the pilot, unless extended by mutual agreement.
- d. In case the participating entity develops or customizes specific components or features exclusively for UIDAI's use during the pilot, the ownership of such enhancements shall be addressed through a separate agreement or clause.
- e. Completion of the pilot phase shall not, in itself, create any obligation on the part of the entity to transfer ownership of its intellectual property to UIDAI, nor shall it impose any obligation on UIDAI to procure or adopt the solution.
- f. Any transfer, licensing, or rights assignment shall be governed by the terms of a separate procurement contract, subject to mutual agreement and applicable financial rules



8. Procurement

Under the SITAA policy framework, UIDAI shall adopt differentiated procurement approaches for various categories of participating entities, based on the nature of engagement and funding support extended. The modalities for each category are outlined below:

8.1 Procurement from entities with funded support from SITAA

- i. Entities selected under the funded category shall be onboarded through a transparent, competitive process initiated via publicly announced problem statements and strategic challenges issued by UIDAI. Eligible entities may submit proposals in response.
- ii. Solutions or products developed with UIDAI's funding support under SITAA shall, by design, be aligned with the strategic objectives and problem statements defined for the respective cohort. These solutions shall be monitored and evaluated based on pre-defined milestones and performance indicators.
- iii. Upon successful development and validation, such solutions may be considered for formal procurement by UIDAI following appropriate procurement guidelines, including provisions for single-source procurement where applicable.

8.2 Procurement from entities with non-funded support from SITAA

- i. For procurement of market-mature solutions from external entities not funded under SITAA, UIDAI may issue a publicly available Expression of Interest (EoI). Eligible and interested vendors shall respond to the EoI with detailed proposals for consideration.
- ii. Proposals selected through this process shall undergo a trial or pilot phase, to be conducted within UIDAI designated test environments. UIDAI may additionally require deployment under a pilot program to assess the operational, technical, and performance parameters of the proposed solution.
- iii. Such pilots shall be conducted under a No Cost, No Commitment (NCNC) arrangement. Under NCNC, UIDAI is not obligated to bear the cost of the trial, nor is it bound to procure the solution post-trial.
- iv. Subject to successful validation, UIDAI may initiate procurement following applicable procurement guidelines, including provisions for single-source procurement where applicable.

The following chart summarizes the procurement from different categories of participating entities:

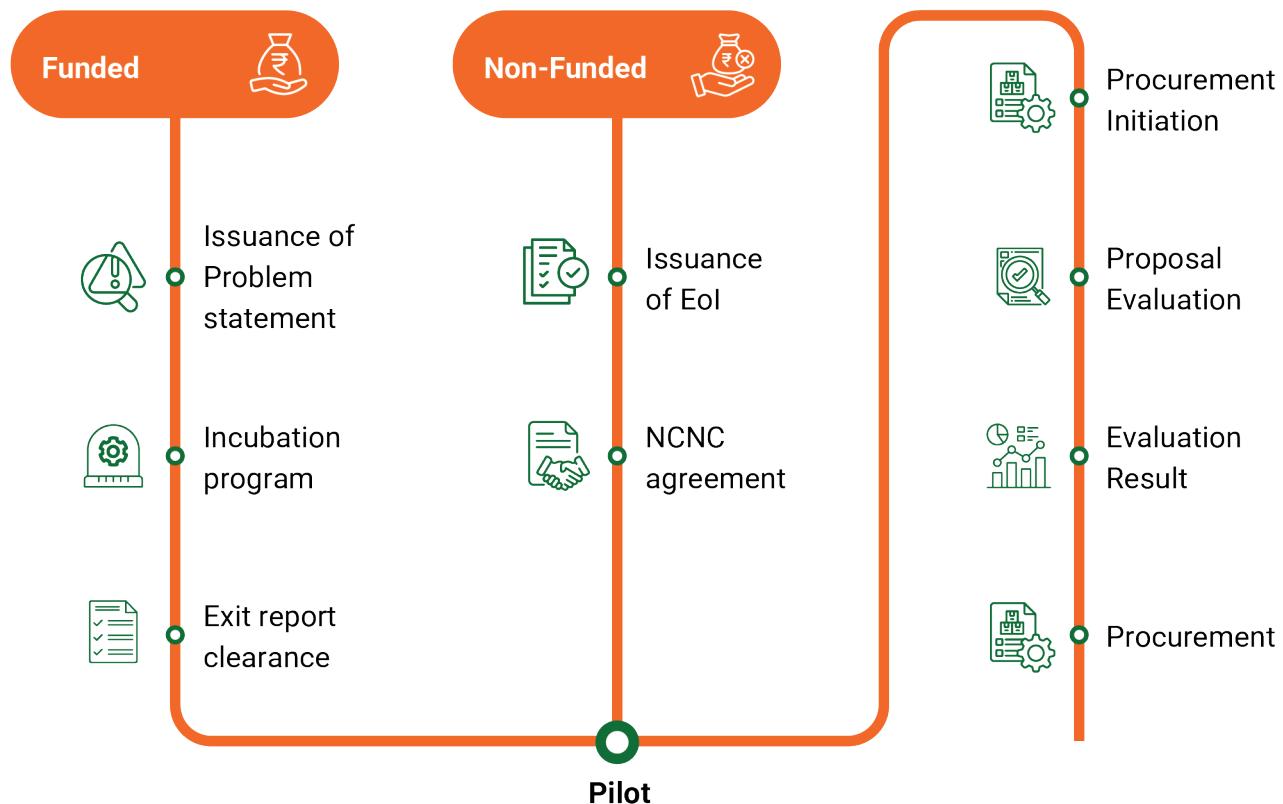


Figure 4: Procurement from different categories of participating entities

9. Ecosystem engagement and outreach

UIDAI shall undertake the following activities for engagement and outreach under SITAA:

- i. Broadcasting technology themes and problem statements to target startups/ academia/industry/partners through various channels, including social media
- ii. Tech showcases at UIDAI and the Aadhaar ecosystem
- iii. Hosting an annual ID tech-based summit in India to bring together stakeholders of the Aadhaar ecosystem and global technology innovators in the Identity domain on one platform
- iv. Participation in relevant conferences, either directly by UIDAI or by one of the partners
- v. Engaging with partners to discuss key innovative technologies and promoting their adoption to enhance Aadhaar systems
- vi. Any other activity required to promote the objectives of the scheme

10. Scheme management and monitoring

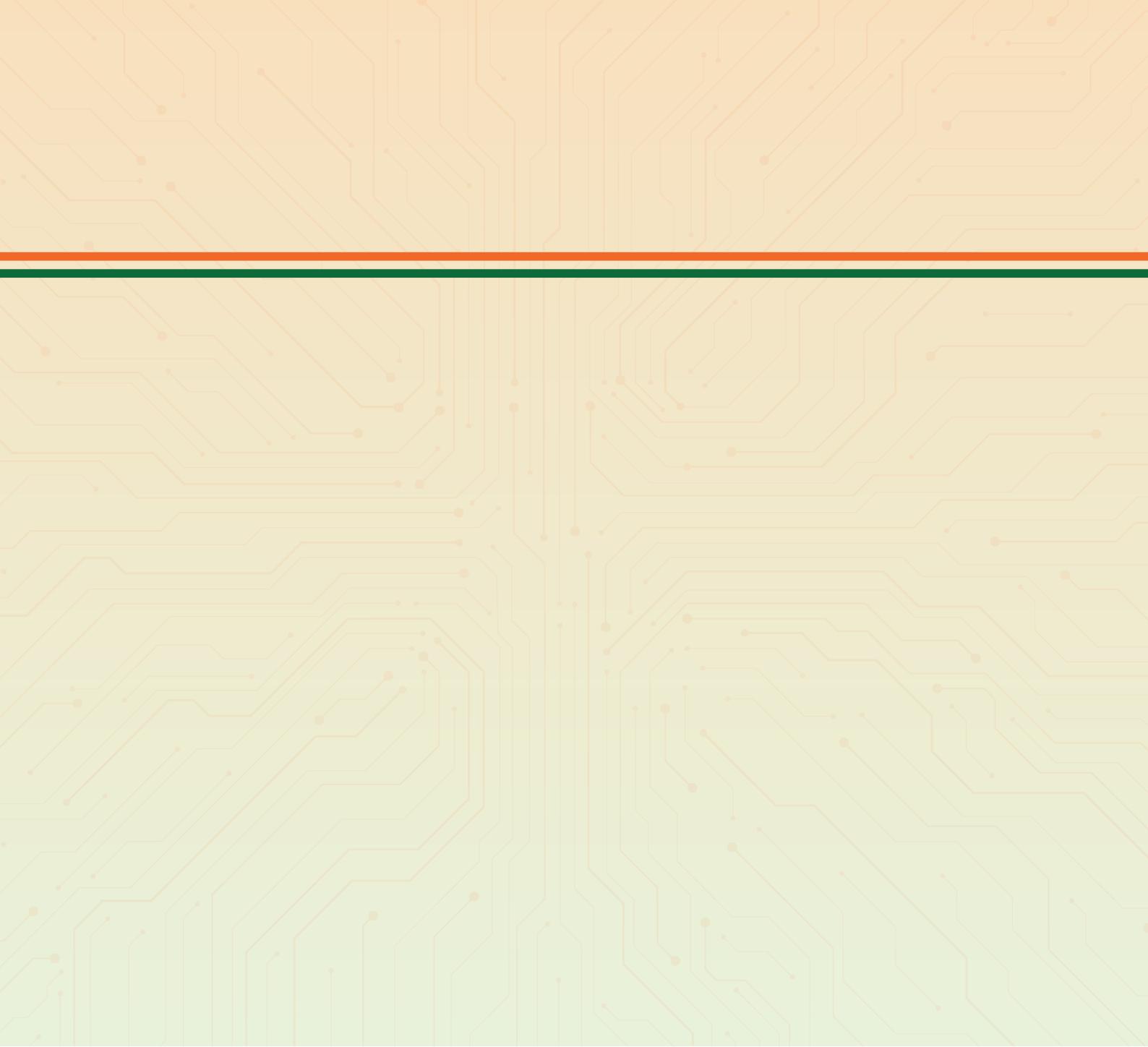
- i. SITAA shall be governed through a structured management framework designed to ensure smooth implementation, strategic alignment, and timely decision-making.
- ii. An implementation team shall oversee challenge curation, partner onboarding, and selection of startups and academic institutions. Cohort performance, milestone progression, and grant disbursals shall be monitored closely through defined evaluation mechanisms and periodic reviews.
- iii. Strategic decisions related to funding allocation and disbursement, policy direction, and ecosystem engagement shall be guided by a high-level oversight body with the authority to approve, review, and redirect the scheme as needed.
- iv. An impact assessment study shall be commissioned periodically to evaluate the effectiveness of the scheme through partner organizations.
- v. UIDAI, in collaboration with its partners, shall release annual reports detailing the activities undertaken detailing the outcome achieved with the cohorts.

11. References

- i. UIDAI Volunteers Guidelines, 2022 - https://uidai.gov.in/images/career/Volunteer_Guideline_2022.pdf
- ii. DPIIT Recognition, Startup India initiative, Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade, Govt. of India - https://www.startupindia.gov.in/content/sih/en/startupgov/startup_recognition_page.html
- iii. National Innovation and Startup Policy, Ministry of Human Resources Development, Govt. of India - <https://nisp.mic.gov.in/>

Annexure I: Eligibility criteria for Funded support

- i. **For Startups** - To qualify for SITAA, startups must fulfill the conditions below:
 - a. Be a recognized Startup by the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT), Ministry of Commerce and Industry, Government of India
 - b. Align their solutions and development to the themes/goals as announced by UIDAI for that round of application
 - c. Such startups can apply under SITAA for further consideration
- ii. **For Academia** - To qualify for SITAA, the academia must fulfill the conditions below:
 - a. Applications shall be accepted only from academia from recognized universities/institutes/ colleges that have aligned themselves with the 'National Innovation and Start-up Policy for Students and Faculty' (NISP 2019) launched by the Ministry of Human Resources Development, Govt. of India
 - b. Such academic applicants must have a faculty member from the same institute as a member, who shall lead the proposed project under SITAA
 - c. All such recognized institutes must have formed an Institution's Innovation Council (IIC) under the NISP framework
 - d. Applications from academia shall be accepted through such IICs, which shall first vet the applications themselves to ensure alignment with SITAA themes and goals, and then submit them for further consideration



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